UNITED NATIONS

S

Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

S/1994/333
24 March 1994

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL PURSUANT TO SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTIONS 844 (1993), 836 (1993) AND 776 (1992)

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In paragraph 6 of its resolution 844 (1993) of 18 June 1993, the Security Council invited the Secretary-General to report on a regular basis on the implementation of that resolution as well as of resolution 836 (1993) of 4 June 1993. In paragraph 5 of resolution 836 (1993) the Council decided to extend the mandate of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR), inter alia, to occupy some key points on the ground in addition to participating in the delivery of humanitarian relief to the population as provided for in resolution 776 (1992) of 14 September 1992. In its resolution 900 (1994) of 4 March 1994, the Council welcomed the goal of "the early reopening of Tuzla airport". The present report is submitted in order to inform the Council of my plans to direct UNPROFOR to reopen Tuzla airport, under its exclusive authority, for the delivery of humanitarian supplies and related purposes.

II. HUMANITARIAN NEEDS

2. It is estimated that approximately 800,000 people live in the Tuzla region, 240,000 of them being refugees and displaced persons and another 200,000 being considered cases in need of assistance. The economy of the region has collapsed, and the unemployment rate is close to 100 per cent. Because of the fighting in central Bosnia, the region has been effectively cut off from normal commercial traffic for almost one year, which has made almost the entire population dependent on humanitarian assistance for its survival.

3. Until the recent Framework Agreement of 1 March 1994 (see S/1994/255), the continued fighting and denial of access had significantly reduced the use of the main humanitarian supply route to Tuzla from the Dalmatian coast, and the access route from Belgrade could not meet all the needs. The shortage of basic items created social tensions in the region in the second half of 1993, which resulted in a number of demonstrations by displaced persons and local inhabitants demanding food. It was in this context, as well as in the expectation that access to the region would worsen considerably during the winter months, that

the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) requested UNPROFOR in June 1993 to initiate the necessary action to make Tuzla airport available for humanitarian airlift operations, in order to supplement the existing land convoy routes. Prior to the winter months, UNHCR reiterated its request, noting that lack of access was a very serious concern in the Tuzla region.

4. More recently, however, the Tuzla municipal authorities have declared that the population has survived the winter, despite difficulties. This was due in great measure to the efforts made by UNPROFOR, UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies to supply the town by road, as well as to another fortunately mild winter. There have also been significant improvements, since February 1994, in access to the region from Belgrade as a result of increased cooperation from the Bosnian Serb authorities. Road access from the coast has improved dramatically since the cease-fire agreement of 23 February 1994 between the Commanders of the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Croatian Defence Council (S/1994/291, annex).

5. Although immediate humanitarian disaster has been avoided, the opening of Tuzla airport would greatly improve the situation in the region. Although access appears to be improving, UNHCR delivered only 25 per cent of the monthly food requirement in the region in February. In March, UNHCR is expecting to deliver between 35 and 40 per cent of the monthly requirement. In addition to the basic food requirement, UNHCR plans to deliver some 500 tons of spring agricultural seeds in the coming weeks in order to achieve some self-sufficiency in food supplies in the region later this year. Furthermore, rapid deliveries of some of the most urgently needed spare parts and materials for coal mines, power stations and water systems are required in the region, if the total collapse of the infrastructure is to be avoided. Until such time as normal commercial traffic is restored, which is yet to be achieved despite the recently improved conditions in central Bosnia, an airlift operation to Tuzla, in addition to access by land, would meet some of those urgent requirements in the region. Air operations in and out of Tuzla by fixed-wing aircraft would contribute to emergency medical evacuations from the area. Furthermore, an increased resupply for UNPROFOR troops by air would free scarce transport capacity for additional humanitarian deliveries to Tuzla by land. The improvement in the humanitarian and social conditions by airlift would also help to preserve the exceptionally multi-ethnic character of the region, a matter of some importance to the local authorities.

III. NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE PARTIES

6. The opening of Tuzla airport has been repeatedly requested by the Tuzla authorities since the spring of 1993. At a meeting held on 20 October 1993 between the Tuzla authorities and representatives of UNPROFOR and the European Community Monitoring Mission, Mayor Salim Beslagic, on behalf of the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina, officially requested the United Nations to reopen the airport for humanitarian purposes.

7. While the Bosnian Serb authorities on the ground had not previously raised objections to the opening of the airport under United Nations control,

Dr. Karadzic, at a meeting on 18 November 1993 with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Mrs. Sadako Ogata, categorically refused to permit its opening prior to the conclusion of an overall peace settlement, stating his strong fear of possible misuse of the airport for military purposes. The same position was repeatedly expressed by Dr. Karadzic on several other occasions.

8. Given the increasing humanitarian need, I requested UNPROFOR to draw up a detailed plan for the opening of Tuzla airport (see S/1994/50). I informed the Council of this plan in my letter dated 28 January 1994 (see S/1994/94), which described three scenarios based on varying degrees of consent of the parties.

9. In pursuing the first scenario, i.e. to open the airport with the consent of the parties, my Special Representative, Mr. Yasushi Akashi, intensified his efforts to obtain such consent. On 1 February 1994, he met with President Izetbegovic and Dr. Karadzic separately, and the basic modalities for the opening of the airport were suggested to both parties in an aide mémoire for their study. Dr. Karadzic, while not agreeing to the opening, promised my Special Representative that he would explore all possible conditions for the opening of the airport. President Izetbegovic also promised to study the proposed modalities.

10. On 7 February 1994, in a meeting with my Special Representative, President Milosevic of Serbia stated that the Bosnian Serbs should not have any objection to the opening of Tuzla airport for humanitarian purposes, provided that there was a mechanism to ensure that the airport was not used for other purposes. The Government of the Russian Federation also supported my Special Representative's negotiations with the Bosnian Serbs, and offered Russian monitors to be included in the UNPROFOR presence at the airport, in order to reinforce UNPROFOR's monitoring and inspection mechanisms.

11. In the meeting with my Special Representative on 6 March 1994, Dr. Karadzic reiterated the statement he had made on 28 February 1994 in Moscow agreeing to the opening of the airport in Tuzla for humanitarian purposes under United Nations control, but he insisted that Bosnian Serb liaison officers be present at the airport in addition to the UNPROFOR monitors. (This is comparable with arrangements currently in place at Sarajevo airport.) The opening of two new air corridors was also agreed with Dr. Karadzic. The authorities of the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina, on the other hand, registered their firm opposition to the presence of Serb liaison officers, stating that monitoring should be fully entrusted to UNPROFOR only. While the issue of liaison officers is yet to be solved, I believe that the opening of Tuzla airport for UNPROFOR purposes is now feasible and that humanitarian flights will be possible before long. On 22 March 1994, with the consent of the parties, my Special Representative and the Force Commander undertook the first UNPROFOR flight by fixed-wing aircraft to Tuzla airport.

IV. STATUS OF PREPARATIONS

12. Tuzla airport is a former Yugoslav Peoples' Army (JNA) facility situated in Dubrave, approximately 10 kilometres to the south of Tuzla. The airfield is located in territory controlled by the Government of the Republic of Bosnia and

Herzegovina. It is situated on a generally flat river bed, largely wooded, and surrounded by hills. The airport facilities consist of three runways; two of these, which are located outside the main airport's boundaries, will be made unusable by UNPROFOR to prevent any possible misuse. On 8 March 1994, with the departure of the elements of the Army of the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina, UNPROFOR's Nordic Battalion took complete control of the airport. The airport is now a secured United Nations facility. UNPROFOR engineers have confirmed that the existing infrastructure, runway, taxiway and tower are in good condition. Fire-fighting and limited material-handling capabilities are being put in place, using the limited resources of the battalion.

13. Tuzla airport will be opened for UNPROFOR and humanitarian use only, and restricted to UNPROFOR and humanitarian airlift aircraft coordinated by UNHCR. All aircraft will be routed into Tuzla through two corridors from Zagreb and Split, respectively. While the first flights will be exclusively undertaken by UNPROFOR aircraft, pending agreement on arrangements governing humanitarian flights, it is important that humanitarian flights begin as soon as possible on a frequent and regular basis after the first few UNPROFOR flights. It is understood that, at least initially, the number of such flights may have to be limited. At first, the airport will be opened only for fair-weather landings under visual flight rules, until all the necessary technical equipment and personnel are in place to upgrade it to an all-weather capability. The airport is now ready for fair-weather landings of a limited number of flights.

V. ADDITIONAL RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS

14. In addition to the Nordic battalion already deployed at the airfield, operating Tuzla airport requires a number of support staff to carry out various communications, administrative, transportation, engineer and logistics support tasks. Apart from the more general administrative and support functions, UNPROFOR has identified a need for some 120 specialist personnel, 20 military observers and 20 United Nations civilian police monitors. Furthermore, certain technical equipment will be required, such as all-weather navigation and landing aids, equipment for facilities and runway maintenance, as well as equipment for air traffic control, weather forecasting, and material handling, in order to upgrade the capabilities to handle higher-volume humanitarian airlift operations. An estimate of the cost for the additional requirements and operating the airport will be submitted as an addendum to the present report.

15. A number of Member States have already indicated their willingness to make available as voluntary contributions to the United Nations the necessary specialized personnel and equipment: Norway has agreed to nominate an airport commander, the senior officer and relevant staff; France has agreed to provide an operations officer, air traffic controllers, and fire fighters; the Netherlands has offered the Deputy Base Commander and pertinent staff; Argentina has agreed to provide a meteorologist and other specialists; the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland will provide loading teams as well as an operations officer; Denmark and Portugal are providing other airport personnel; and Germany will provide some equipment. A number of other countries have made offers which have yet to be confirmed. It is anticipated that most facility maintenance can be conducted by UNPROFOR's military/civilian engineers. A

shortfall remains, however, in administration and operations staff as well as for aircraft servicing teams. In order to start the humanitarian airlift operations without delay, it is essential that all required personnel and equipment become available as soon as possible.

16. I should like to express my appreciation to those Member States and regional organizations and arrangements which have lent their political, diplomatic, and material support to UNPROFOR's and UNHCR's efforts in this matter.

VI. OBSERVATIONS

17. Tuzla has been characterized as a unique place in Bosnia and Herzegovina where the three major ethnic groups co-exist in the midst of tragic inter-communal conflict. Combined with the current positive developments in central Bosnia as a result of the cease-fire between the Army of the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Bosnian Croat forces, the early start of a humanitarian airlift to Tuzla, which would permit delivery particularly of spring seeds as well as of some infrastructure support materials, will help ensure the welfare of the inhabitants of the wider Tuzla area and their ability to begin the reconstruction and rehabilitation of a region gravely affected by war. The opening of Tuzla airport for the first UNPROFOR flight on 22 March appears to have made a positive psychological impact on the local population in the region. At the same time, it should be stressed that obstacles remain in the way of an agreement governing the modalities of the full-fledged reopening of the airport. My Special Representative is therefore continuing intensive negotiations with the parties in order to achieve such an agreement.

18. Since the opening of Tuzla airport is being pursued for the purpose of improving the capability to deliver humanitarian assistance, the activity would fall within the existing mandate given by Security Council resolutions 836 (1993) and 844 (1994). UNPROFOR has been proceeding with its plans on that basis. However, in light of the political importance of this action and the need for additional resources to ensure the safe operation of the airport, I believe that the explicit approval and support of the Security Council is required. I would, therefore, recommend that the Security Council approve UNPROFOR's plans for the opening of Tuzla airport for humanitarian purposes and approve the additional resources requested for this purpose. I shall keep the Council informed of developments concerning the reopening of the airport.